

Remarks Following a Conversation With the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States and an Exchange With Reporters *April 29, 2004*

The President. The Vice President and I just finished a good conversation with the 9/11 Commission. It was wide ranging. It was important. It was just a good discussion, and I appreciate the members.

I want to thank the Chairman and Vice-Chairman for bringing the Commission here and giving us a chance to share views on different subjects. They had a lot of good questions. I'm glad I did it. I'm glad I took the time. This is an important Commission, and it's important that they ask the questions they ask so that they can help make recommendations necessary to better protect our homeland. It was—I enjoyed it.

Let me ask—answer a couple of questions.

President's Meeting With the 9/11 Commission

Q. Mr. President, what topic did the Commissioners want to spend most of the time on? And were there any subjects that you didn't answer or were advised by your Counsel not to answer?

The President. No, I was never advised by my Counsel not to answer anything. I answered every question they asked. Really—probably best that I not go into the details of the conversation. Let them incorporate into their report. There was a lot of interest in—about how to better protect America. In other words, they're very interested in the recommendations that they're going to lay out, and I'm interested in those as well.

And we discussed a lot of things, Terry [Terence Hunt, Associated Press], a lot of subjects, and it was a very cordial conversation. I was impressed by the questions, and I think it helped them understand how I think and how I run the White House and how we deal with threats.

John [John King, Cable News Network].

Joint Appearance With Vice President Cheney

Q. Mr. President, as you know, a lot of critics suggested that you wanted to appear jointly with the Vice President so that you two could keep your stories straight, or something—

The President. Yes.

Q. —can you tell us what you think of the value of appearing together and how you would answer those critics?

The President. Yes. First of all, look, if we had something to hide, we wouldn't have met with them in the first place. We answered all their questions, and as I say, I think I—I came away good about the session, because I wanted them to know how I set strategy, how we run the White House, how we deal with threats. The Vice President answered a lot of their questions—answered all their questions. And I think it was important for them to see our body language as well, how we work together.

But it was—you know, the Commissioners will speak for themselves over time. They will let you know whether they thought it was a fruitful series of discussions. I think they did. I think they found it to be useful.

Yes.

Transcript

Q. Mr. President, don't you think that the families deserve to have a transcript or to be able to see what you said?

The President. Adam [Adam Entous, Reuters], you asked me that question yesterday.

Q. I'm hoping for an answer today.

The President. I've got the same answer. Yes.

Al Qaida

Q. Mr. President, can you say with any confidence that there are no Al Qaida operatives active in the country today?

The President. No, I can't say that.

Q. Did the Commission ask you about that?

The President. No, they didn't. But I'm not going to get into any more details about what they asked me. I told you I wasn't going to get into details about what they asked me, and then I just fell into your trap.

But no, let me talk about vulnerabilities, and then I've got to get back to work. We are still vulnerable to attack. And the reason why is, Al Qaida still exists. Al Qaida is dangerous. Al Qaida hates us. And we have to be correct 100 percent of the time in defending America, and they've got to

be right once. And therefore, we are vulnerable.

But people need to know, we're working—we, the government, at all levels—are working long hours to protect America. We're doing the best we can. The best way to secure America, however, is to stay on the offensive and bring those people to justice before they harm America again. And that's what we're continuing to do. But yes, so long as there's an Al Qaida enemy that is willing to kill, we are vulnerable.

Thank you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:16 p.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Thomas H. Kean, Chairman, and Lee H. Hamilton, Vice Chairman, National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States (9/11 Commission).

Statement on Senate Action on Proposed Internet Tax Nondiscrimination Legislation

April 29, 2004

I commend the Senate for moving forward to expand access to broadband technology. The "Internet Tax Nondiscrimination Act" is an important step toward permanently banning access taxes on

broadband that will help make high-speed Internet services more affordable, increase the number of broadband users, and enhance our Nation's economic competitiveness.

The President's News Conference With Prime Minister Paul Martin of Canada

April 30, 2004

President Bush. The Prime Minister and I will have some opening comments. We'll answer two questions per side.

Mr. Prime Minister, welcome. I'm glad you're here. I've really been looking for-

ward to this meeting because I view it as a meeting between friends and allies.

I really appreciate the Prime Minister's clear vision about the world in which we live. He understands the danger of terror. He understands the opportunity of trade,